

ENERGY WORKSHOP

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Energy policy has become a non-issue in most of the country. Strong exhortation from the executive branch and little activity on the part of Congress has left the general public jaded on the issue.

Policy education related to energy appears to be most useful to citizens. That is if it stresses basic concepts that allow the individual to develop a perspective for assessing the multitude of energy issues and advocates. Such a program might focus on the following points:

1. The finite nature of resources basic to energy and other resource questions.
2. The important distinction between relative and absolute prices, and the special importance of relative prices in resource use decisions.
3. The important distinctions (alternatives and consequences) between pricing and allocating. The attempts of any political system to avoid pain from either and trying to mix the two.
4. The interrelationship between our energy problem, balance of payments, and domestic inflation.
5. The different requirements for public sector and private sector decisions. The need for some basic public sector decisions about the future use and availability of energy resources before many important private sector decisions can be made.

One public policy program that has been effective over the last year has been the Iowa program on *Land, Water, and Energy in the Third Century*. The broad focus of this program meant that it was not tied solely to energy concerns. It also involved a large commitment of Iowa State's resources.

The pull from the public is for energy information on technology, both new and old. This is expected to solve individual problems. There is a large and growing demand for information on home insulation, weatherizing, etc. It is especially important that the information we give in these technical areas be consistent and have

some economic analysis behind it. Excellent materials have been developed in the Northeast, and these states are willing to share their materials. A special effort needs to be made not to re-invent the wheel. The Massachusetts program is a good example of a technical service effort for families.

Home economists have an especially important role to play because of the focus of citizens' perceived needs upon homes and family units. A special effort should be made to assure that home economists have the technical knowledge they need to be effective with their clientele.

An important question left partially unanswered is how to deal with the extensive advocacy for energy policy of different groups. Cooperative Extension does not have the capacity to field truth squads. But can we not do more than try to give individuals a clearer perspective in situations where facts, or their interpretation are being distorted?